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Although there might not be any one solution to the problems of how and when to introduce literature effectively into the college language curriculum, stress, at any level, should be placed both on student enjoyment and the relevancy and difficulty of the reading materials selected. College language teachers must investigate (1) what constitutes good reading habits, (2) the use of English in the foreign language classroom, (3) vocabulary building techniques, (4) the inclusion of folklore, and (5) integrated courses the cut across subject areas if literature is to have a secure position in the curriculum of the future. (AF)

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"HOW AND WHEN -- LITERATURE IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CURRICULUM"

(Editor's note: The following is a synopsis of a lecture, given at the combined meeting of the AATS and AATG Chapters at Blacksburg, Virginia, May 3, 1969.)

There are many indications which make the topic relevant to the status of foreign language teaching of today. The great enthusiasm about foreign languages may be on the wane. High school administrators point their fingers at the high attrition rate occuring between lower and upper level foreign language courses. Small enrollments have to be justified for budgetary purposes. A variety of new integrated courses in the humanities and social sciences appeal to college bound high school students. The relevance to contemporary problems contained in these courses, including new approaches to learning and their experimental nature are often more attractive to students than upper level courses.

On the undergraduate and graduate level, foreign language requirements are again scrutinized as to relevance and need. Joseph Axelrod, Project Director, Center of Research and Development in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley, for example, recommends in "Current Issues in Higher Education, 1968", the abolition of foreign language requirements, to be substituted by requirements in courses in the area of intercultural studies. Furthermore, generous study grants are no longer readily available, as they once were.

Those of us who teach in college and universities are often painfully aware that the number of years a high school graduate has been exposed to a foreign language has little relevance to a thorough background of language study. Students should be better prepared, not only because their teachers had been better prepared, but also because of the mass media with which the school finds itself in competition and because of increased participation on the part of the younger generation in the politics and culture of society. We should have more and better prepared students in our foreign language classes. We have new insights about language and language learning and we have improved our methodology. Why is it then that we are driving students away from our language programs? Are they too narrow in the present language-literature framework because they are geared to those who desire advanced placement or those who plan to major in a foreign language? Is there too much or not enough literature?

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A distinction must be made between the terms "reading matter" and "literature". To read is to comprehend language patterns from their written representation quickly without analysis of what symbols represent what sounds. This is a skill that comes through

habit. Rather than attempting to state a definition of literature, let us be satisfied in enumerating some of the terms used in definitions: imagination, aesthetic intent, structure, and work of art. Furthermore, literature must give us aesthetic pleasure and mean something worthwhile to an individual in order to be effective.

When should literature be introduced in the foreign language curriculum? We must assume that we are beginning our language program with primary emphasis on understanding and speaking. Whatever reading is done should be closely connected with audio-lingual work. The different stages leading to liberated reading, "unglossed, unadapted readings of normal difficulty" have been summarized in the 1967 Report of the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages:

Stage I — Reading of materials already learned audiolingually (Grade 9)

Stage II — Reading of materials which recombine vocabulary and structure already learned audiolingually (Grade 9)

Stage III — Reading of specially written materials that introduce new vocabulary and grammar progressively. One new vocabulary item should be introduced in every 35 running words of text or one new word in every 4 lines or 7 new words to each 250 word page. Each new word should be repeated 2-3 times. Students should have a recognition vocabulary of 2000 words at the completion of this stage. (Grades 9-10)

Stage IV — Adapted and/or edited selections from literature of "less well-known" but respected authors. New vocabulary and grammar are introduced progressively. In order to enter the next level, the student should have a recognition vocabulary of 4000-5000 words, including many synonyms. (Grades 11-12)

Stage V — Unadapted readings of normal difficulty. (Grade 12)

The authors of the report believe that Stave VI should be reached in order to begin liberated reading and they say "unless the student can express himself orally and in writing, the study of foreign literature becomes almost worthless, devoid of intellectual content and aesthetic appreciation."

The college teacher assumes that students have gone happily from one reading stage to the next so that he can teach literature at his heart's delight. The teacher thinks, "Let the high school do all the preparatory work, let the college teach literature." What happens in reality is another matter. We in college start instruction in reading literature much earlier than we are supposed

to, we select materials which we find interesting and challenging--literary or just plain reading matter--and we often compromise the language and cultural objectives in our eagerness to teach for literary understanding and appreciation. We cover too much too fast. Reading becomes translation, something we know should be avoided; but our students who have to finish a number of pages as assignment do not know this.

There are some proponents who state that literature can and should be introduced early in language learning, even though language proficiency may have to be sacrificed. We have many students in our classes who are not language majors and who just want to fulfill their language requirements. Literature as a motivational device should be considered a factor in attracting students to the study of foreign languages.

In deciding when and how literature should be studied, three points ought to be kept in mind: (1) will the student enjoy what he is going to read. (2) is it relevant to his needs. (3) will it be within the range of his language competence?

The teacher should be interested not only in the reading habits, but also in the type of literature, the content and the aesthetic level of the materials read in English classes. It could be valuable to discuss likes and dislikes of students regarding literature in general and the way literature had been presented. We must also consider the question of relevance. We can not afford to ignore the maturity level of students in relation to materials to be read in a foreign language. Most high school teachers are well aware of the problems their students are encountering, their search for identity, their interest in existentialism, and their impatience, to name just a few. A casual look at a list of English books students find exciting and rewarding should prove a valuable insight into the socio-psychological maturation level of the students. In introducing literature, we must be aware that students often have to switch from their mechanical structure drill-learning to a completely new experience, reading. This can be a crucial point in their language development. Furthermore, there is a wide range of abilities and competencies which must be properly assessed. This can be done through either teacher-made tests and/or nationwide proficiency and achievement tests. It would also be advisable to have students read aloud passages in the foreign language as a testing device.

Granted that there is a difference between learning to read in a foreign language and learning to read in English, we must assume that good reading habits in English are automatically transferred in reading a foreign language text. Our colleagues who are reading experts in English could give us some valuable advice regarding methods and equipment which could be used to help slow readers in foreign languages.

What we must constantly keep in mind is this: enjoyment of literature, relevance, and language competence have to be related to the objectives which students have in mind in taking a foreign language. While recognizing that all students should be acquainted with the literature of a foreign language, it must also be emphasized that those who are not majoring in a foreign language and who are not inclined towards the humanities need to be recognized and reading materials for their benefit should be made available. For these students, literary experiences in depth may be blocking further their interest in the study of foreign languages, while reading in their field of interest could motivate them to appreciate literary experiences. The mere concern in recognizing their subject matter interest could be used to suggest available materials in the foreign language on their reading level and could possibly save potential drop-outs from intermediate language classes. Let them discuss what they have read--in English, write summaries, or try any other way possible to keep their interest in the foreign language.

The use of the English language in the foreign language classroom, considered heresy by many language authorities, has lately been re-evaluated. John Carroll in his study of "The Foreign Language Attainment of Language Majors in the Senior Year" (1967) reported, for example, that 50% of the college courses, as stated by majors, were conducted "occasionally" in the foreign language. Studies made by Wallace Lambert and others at McGill University by Kenneth D. Chastain at Purdue, and an increasing number of other studies emphasize the use of English in explanations.

The answer as to how much English is to be used is dictated by the level of language competence of the students and the type of reading to be accomplished. The two principles of enjoyment and relevance as motivational factors on the part of the students, should also be considered in deciding how the foreign language used in the classroom could be modified through the use of English. As to the use of parallel translations, allowing students to read literary texts in English first before giving assignments in the same foreign language text, summarizing content in detail, and other devices to motivate students, let us not condemn these, but let us make an attempt, at least, to find out how students really learn best. Standards must be kept, the foreign language must be used in the classroom as much as possible. But what happens between one class and the next during the preparation of the assignment by the student ought to be of interest to us as teachers and has a direct and important bearing on the type and scope of subsequent assignments.

Vocabulary deficiencies are one of the most serious handicaps in the reading development of our students. Some texts and readers on the market have already incorporated possible solutions to the vocabulary building problem. Techniques which can be used to further direct-reading ability (as opposed to translations) are--the use of inference, programming, graded readers, vocabulary building exercises, and visuals.

Folklore, literature in a foreign language orally transmitted and classified, such as ballads, folktales, folksongs, sayings, superstitions, etc., should be considered a motivational device. The inclusion of folklore as literature could be one way of relating different subject matter fields while, at the same time, reminding students of the history of their own cultural region, and of relating their knowledge of language with the folklore of immigrants from minority groups in metropolitan areas or other regions in the United States.

One more suggestion is offered to widen the scope of literature and its place in the curriculum. As stated before, an increasing number of high schools are offering integrated courses in the humanities and social sciences. What aspects of foreign culture and literature are taught in these classes? Could it be that such courses be initiated by foreign language teachers and planned cooperatively with those instructors teaching other disciplines? There is a need to experiment or at least to recognize what has been done by our colleagues and if possible, to contribute to existing programs. We must be ready to cooperate and by our willingness to cut across subject matter fields we may even motivate our students to continue the study of foreign languages and also to fulfill one of our primary functions, to create a feeling of intercultural understanding.

In conclusion, there is one basic fact which we all must keep in mind. Whether we teach in the elementary or high schools, colleges or universities, we must be aware of each others' problems. We can not blame our colleagues in high school for the shortcomings of our students without blaming ourselves. Many of our colleagues have never had an opportunity to travel and study abroad, to be immersed in the culture of the country or area, the language and literature of which they are teaching to the best of their ability. They are teaching large classes, often sacrificing a free period a day to teach third and fourth level courses--most administrators do not see the need for small classes--few provisions are made for needed library acquisitions and supplementary tests in the foreign language. Our colleagues from the State Department who are always willing to help to the best of their ability can not do the task alone. We who are teaching in colleges and universities should do our share, not only by offering summer courses but by sharing materials, textbooks, equipment, visitations, in a spirit of cooperation. How can literature be taught and students become interested in reading unless materials are available?

By now it is obvious that there are no infallible prescriptions for introducing literature in the curriculum. The individual teacher, his enthusiasm and his desire to experiment, his background and desire to improve what he is attempting to do, his sense of humor and love for those he teaches--these are the real, the important factors. There is no one solution to the problem.

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